

Amendments to the Claims

Claim 12 has been cancelled without prejudice. Claims 1, 7, 13, 14, and 79 have been amended. New claims 80-85 have been added. The following list of claims replaces all prior versions and lists of claims in the application.

1. (Currently Amended) A cartridge for determining the presence or amount of a microbial contaminant in a sample, the cartridge comprising:

(i) a housing defining a fluid inlet port, an optical cell, and a conduit having a fluid contacting surface for providing fluid flow communication between the fluid inlet port and the optical cell, ~~wherein the optical cell is located downstream of the conduit;~~ and

(ii) a hemocyte lysate and an anti-flaking agent dried on a region of the fluid contacting surface of the conduit, ~~so that~~ wherein, when a sample is applied to the fluid inlet port, the sample traverses the region and solubilizes the hemocyte lysate during transport to the optical cell.

2. (Previously Presented) The cartridge of claim 1, further comprising a chromogenic substrate disposed on a second, different region of the fluid contacting surface.

3. (Previously Presented) The cartridge of claim 2 or 79, wherein the second region is located downstream of the first region.

4. (Previously Presented) The cartridge of claim 1 or 79, further comprising a preselected amount of an agent representative of the microbial contaminant disposed on the fluid contacting surface of the conduit.

5. (Original) The cartridge of claim 4, wherein the agent is disposed on the first region.

6. (Original) The cartridge of claim 4, wherein the agent is a bacterial endotoxin or a (1→3)-β-D glucan.

7. (Currently Amended) A cartridge for determining the presence or amount of a microbial contaminant in a sample, the cartridge comprising:

(i) a housing defining

a first fluid inlet port, a first optical cell, and a first conduit having a fluid contacting surface for providing fluid flow communication between the first fluid inlet port and the first optical cell, and

a second fluid inlet port, a second optical cell, and a second conduit having a fluid contacting surface for providing fluid flow communication between the second fluid inlet port and the second optical cell;

(ii) a first hemocyte lysate dried on a first region of the fluid contacting surface of the first conduit, so that when a sample is applied to the first fluid inlet port, the sample traverses the region and solubilizes the first hemocyte lysate during transport to the first optical cell; and

(iii) a second hemocyte lysate dried on a first region of the fluid contacting surface of the second conduit, so that when sample is applied to the second fluid inlet port, the sample traverses the region and solubilizes the second hemocyte lysate during transport to the second optical cell, and

(iv) an agent representative of a microbial contaminant dried on the fluid contacting surface of the first conduit.

8. (Previously Presented) The cartridge of claim 7, further comprising a chromogenic substrate disposed on a second, different region of the fluid contacting surface of the first conduit.

9. (Previously Presented) The cartridge of claim 8, wherein the second region is located downstream of the first region.

10. (Previously Presented) The cartridge of claim 8, further comprising a chromogenic substrate disposed on a second, different region of the fluid contacting surface of the second conduit.

11. (Previously Presented) The cartridge of claim 10, wherein the second region is located downstream of the first region.

12. (Cancelled)

13. (Currently Amended) The cartridge of claim ~~12~~ 7, wherein the agent is disposed on the first region.

14. (Currently Amended) The cartridge of claim ~~12~~ 7, wherein the agent is a bacterial endotoxin or a (1→3)-β-D glucan.

15-78. (Cancelled).

79. (Currently Amended) A cartridge for determining the presence or amount of a microbial contaminant in a sample, the cartridge comprising:

(i) a housing defining a fluid inlet port, an optical cell located downstream of the fluid inlet port, and a first conduit having a fluid contacting surface for providing fluid flow communication between the fluid inlet port and the optical cell, a pump port located downstream of the optical cell, and a conduit connecting the optical cell and the pump port;

(ii) a hemocyte lysate ~~disposed~~ dried on a first region of the fluid contacting surface of the first conduit; and

(iii) a chromogenic substrate ~~disposed~~ dried on a second, different region of the fluid contacting surface of the first conduit,

wherein, when a sample is applied to the fluid inlet port, the sample traverses the first and second regions and solubilizes the hemocyte lysate and chromogenic substrate during transport to the optical cell.

80. (New) A method of detecting the presence of a microbial contaminant in a sample, the method comprising the steps of:

(a) introducing a sample into the sample inlet port of the cartridge of claim 1, 7 or 79;

(b) permitting the sample to move to the optical cell; and

(c) measuring an optical property of the sample in the optical cell, wherein a change in the optical property is indicative of the presence of a microbial contaminant in the sample.

81. (New) The method of claim 80, wherein the change in optical property is an increase in absorbance of light of a preselected wavelength.

82. (New) The method of claim 80, wherein the change in optical property is a decrease in transmission of light of a preselected wavelength.

83. (New) A method of determining the amount of a microbial contaminant in a sample, the method comprising the steps of:

(a) introducing a sample into the sample inlet port of the cartridge of claim 1, 7 or 79;

(b) permitting the sample to move to the optical cell;

(c) measuring the time in which a preselected change occurs in an optical property of the sample in the optical cell; and

(d) comparing the time measuring in step (c) against a predetermined standard curve to determine the amount of the microbial contaminant in the sample.

84. (New) The method of claim 83, wherein the change in optical property is an increase in absorbance of light of a preselected wavelength.

85. (New) The method of claim 83, wherein the change in optical property is a decrease in transmission of light of a preselected wavelength.